

**Gevonia R. Whittington, Office of Homeland Security Director**

**Last year, you mentioned in your budget review that you anticipate salary lapses for FY19. What is your vacancy rate as of January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019?**

As of January 30, 2019, there are 34 vacant positions, resulting in a total budgeted salary of \$1,854,578; of which 31 are General Fund vacancies (\$1,620,578) and 3 are LTGF vacancies (\$234,000).

**Do you still anticipate salary lapses in the current fiscal year based on your vacancies and attrition?**

Yes. Based on our vacancies and attrition, OHS still anticipates salary lapse in the current fiscal year.

**What is your monthly vacancy rate?** OHS has an average monthly vacancy rate of 2.8.

**What is your monthly attrition for OHS?**

OHS attrition averages 2.50 personnel per month to either resign or retire.

(Over the past several years, an average of two personnel every month resign, retire or have been released within PSC).

**Each budget meeting, for the last eight years, The Office of Homeland Security has requested additional permanent positions. Are you planning to ask for an increase in the number of permanent positions? Yes. If so, how many permanent positions are you requesting to fulfill your goals and objectives for the upcoming Fiscal Year?**

- **OHS /Administration is requesting two (2) additional permanent positions.**
  - **Investigator III – This position will serve as the agency's Disciplinary Coordinator.**
  - **Administrative Assistant III – This position will serve as the coordinator of the Agency's Critical Infrastructure Protection & Awareness Unit (CIPA)**
- Two (2) additional Technical Services positions are required to support the large number of enterprise-wide public safety projects supported by OHS/PSC Technical Services Staff. These positions are required to ensure support of existing technology, and the additional projects that have been absorbed such to include NG911, Text to 9-1-1, video storage, FirstNet oversight and enterprise-wide public safety technical programs were put into place over the past year. Two additional staff members, with commensurate technical skill levels are now required to handle the existing and additional workloads.
- While a recent staffing study recommended additional merit Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher positions to meet call answer time and dispatch goals, the primary focus is on filling existing vacancies. Once staffing is stabilized, additional positions will be requested in future budget requests.
- One additional emergency management specialist position is to support OHS/OEM missions. The position will support a wide-range of functions with emergency management to include: planning, training, exercises, community outreach and educations, recovery, operations/response and mitigation.

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- With the 2018 proposal of the National Capital Region Homeland Security Executive Committee (HSEC) to reduce current and future sustainment projects, creating permanent positions to offset these reductions will significantly advance the mission of OHS/OEM.

**Charlynn Flaherty, Director of Public Safety Communications**

**Mrs. Flaherty, as the Director of Public Safety Communications, what challenges do you face, if any, in filling existing vacancies?**

- There are two major challenges in filling vacancies.
  - Keeping pace with the entrance level salaries offered by other jurisdictions is a challenge.
  - As a result of cooperative efforts between OHRM and OHS/PSC, it was learned that an adequate number of applicants are available for the hiring process. However, time delays in the hiring process result in a loss of many of the most qualified candidates. Over the summer months, OHRM initiated a program to double the number of weekly CritiCall® entrance exam test dates for Emergency Call Taker I/II (ECT) and Emergency Dispatcher I/II (ED) applicants. OHRM PSI also performed the initial screening process immediately after the test. Internal resources performed the oral interviews twice per week. The additional testing, streamlining of the process and additional oral interviews were resoundingly successful, and resulted in a significant increase in the number of new Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher employees hired to attend the Public Safety Communications training academy classes. Unfortunately, the additional testing and oral interview processes stopped. It must be noted that PSC has recently initiated efforts for PSC Technical Services and Operations staff to assist in the oral interview process.

**Does the Office of Public Safety Communications use grant funds for the employment of staff?**

- There are no grant funded positions allocated to PSC

**Please indicate the number of (i) grant funded and (ii) merit positions required to achieve your goals.**

- There are no grant funded positions allocated to PSC
- While a recent staffing study recommended additional merit Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher positions to meet call answer time and dispatch goals, the primary focus is on filling existing vacancies. At full authorized strength, PSC would have the following non-supervisory/non-management staffing:
  - Operations Division
    - 70 – Emergency Call Takers
    - 80 – Emergency Dispatchers
    - 4 – Emergency Call Taker overstaff positions
    - 3 – Emergency Dispatcher overstaff positions
  - Technical Services Division

- 6 – Communication Specialists
- 1 – Inventory Control Coordinator
- 3 – Audio MPIA/Subpoena Coordinators

- Deputy Director OHS/PSC Office
  - 1 – Administrative Aide (assists in Audio/Subpoena processing)

**How many grant positions does Public Safety Communications have and how many grant vacancies do you have currently?**

- There are no grant funded positions allocated to PSC.

**How are you managing overtime? How do the vacancies impact overtime in achieving your goals and objectives?**

Salary lapse is used to fund the overrun overtime budget.

- PSC uses overtime to meet service level demands that current staffing does not allow due to vacancies. This includes backfilling vacant dispatcher and call taker positions; backfilling the vacancy in the Audio Section; providing on-call functions to respond to technical emergencies related to the CAD, RMS, Civil Processing, 9-1-1 equipment, etc.; providing staff to FedEx Field functions; upstaffing to provide support for special initiatives (warrant sweeps, on-site dispatch support, DUI check points, etc.); providing staff in support of EOC activations.

**With the anticipation of Nextgen, what is your agency strategy to address Nextgen 911 with your agency existing budget to ensure compliance with the stipulations for NEXTGEN 911?**

- I am honored to serve as a member of the Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 in Maryland, and one of four Chairs of the Commission's Subcommittees. I am also an active member of the COG 9-1-1 Directors Committee and the State of Maryland Emergency Communications Committee. This allows Prince George's County to influence the development of regional and statewide strategies in the overall implementation of NG911.
- The Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 in Maryland Report that was submitted to the Governor on December 1, 2018, contained twenty-three recommendations to help counties and the state move forward with this important effort. Among these recommendations are legislative efforts to assist in the funding of this new and costly technology. Should this legislation pass, financial assistance will allow additional funding to support the new NG911 network. Legislation also includes staffing standards and call taker and dispatcher training and certification standards.
- Among the requests for additional staffing in this budget cycle is the need for two additional technical support staff to meet the 9-1-1 network, GIS, administrative and cybersecurity needs associated NG911 and the integration of NG911 data to other public safety systems.
- In anticipation of the need for staffing changes associated with NG911, a Staffing Study was proactively funded to review current and future technical and operational staffing

requirements in support of NG911. The study was finalized in concert with the Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 in Maryland report, and provided recommendations for additional staff, succession planning, shift plans, the need for cross training and reviewed span of control ratios.

- Following the guidelines provided in the December 1 Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 in Maryland Report and the recommendations provided in the Staffing Study will allow PSC to strategically move forward, requesting additional funding in anticipation of the need rather than after the need arises.
- The existing budget will not meet all staffing, technical and networking requirements associated with NG911.

**Ronald Gill, Director of the Office of Emergency Management**

Mr. Gill, as Director of the Office of Emergency Management, what challenges do you face, if any, in filling existing vacancies?

- On most occasions, there is a lack of emergency management experience for the applicants. There is no class specification for the emergency management field. By using current County specifications such as Community Developer and Planner creates a register with minimum, if any public safety and more specifically emergency management experience. Additionally, Prince George's County is the only jurisdiction within the NCR that the UASI contractors are not jurisdictional employees.

How many grant positions does the Office of Emergency Management have and how many grant vacancies do you have currently?

- Seven positions and currently two (2) vacancies. One (1) of these vacancies will be filled Monday February 11, 2019
- ***There are currently 10 LTGF positions with the agency; as of 2/1/2019 there were 3 vacancies. However, there are 2 pending offers.***

What will be the difference between grant funded and merit positions in achieving your goals?

- The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) contract administered by the DC HSEMA for the grant-funded personnel strategically allocated throughout the National Capital Region (NCR) prohibits personnel from participating in several core functions within the emergency management discipline. This includes: staffing the emergency operations center, response, community outreach, recovery, and mitigation activities.

For the last three grant cycles, please provide (i) the total amount of funding received by the Office of Emergency Management and (ii) the amount of funds unused and returned during each cycle relative to the following three grants: *(Please reference grant cycle chart below)*

- Urban Areas Securities Initiative
- State Homeland Security Grant
- State Emergency Management

	FY'16 Award \$	FY'16 Unspent \$	FY'15 Award \$	FY'15 Unspent \$	FY'14 Award \$	FY'14 Unspent \$
UASI	1,952,198	125,546	1,709,350	100,294	1,771,600	106,491
SHSGP	384,605	5,345	384,604	718	432,800	1,001
EMPG	303,393	2,042	303,003	924	303,487	5,922
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,640,196</b>	<b>132,933</b>	<b>2,396,957</b>	<b>101,936</b>	<b>2,507,887</b>	<b>113,414</b>

How are you managing overtime? How do the vacancies impact overtime in achieving your goals and objectives?

Rhonda Jackson, Director of Human Resources for the Office of Homeland Security

What are the challenges, if any, the Office of Homeland Security is experiencing in filling vacancies for permanent positions?

- There are significant challenges in filling Emergency Dispatcher and Emergency Call Taker positions within PSC. A recent evaluation of applications reveals an adequate number of applicants (after the changes to the Emergency Dispatcher minimum qualifications). However, moving the applicants through the hiring process is a challenge.
- Challenges filling vacant permanent positions are due to: (1) inability to use grant funds to create permanent positions, (2) establishing appropriate class of work for positions associated with emergency management, (3) job incentives and (4) the County's extensive onboarding process, which includes the background investigation.

How do you use your grant funds to assist with meeting vacancies for OEM and PSC?

- There are no grant funded positions allocated to PSC.
- Grant funds are used to fully fund compensation for LTGF vacancies within the OEM.

Why are you having challenges filling (and maintaining) Limited Term Grant Funded positions?

- Candidates are seeking full-time merit positions
- Competency levels between seasoned professionals versus career seekers. Significant training is required at both levels, which creates delays in accomplishing scope of works outlined by the grantor
- Competing incentives from neighboring jurisdictions



### **How much time is required for the Office of Homeland Security to fill a vacant position?**

- Over the summer months, a streamlined testing, preliminary screening, and oral interview process accelerated the hiring process and ability to fill vacant positions. A request has been submitted to OHRM to reinstitute this process. It is important for this effort to be put into place on a permanent basis.

### **How does the Office of Homeland Security collaborate with the Office Human Resources and Management to fill the Office of Homeland Security vacancies?**

- PSC has worked extensively with OHRM to overcome its Emergency Dispatcher and Emergency Call Taker hiring challenges. This includes:
  - PSC has worked with OHRM to confirm the processes required for experienced former Prince George's County PSC Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher employees to seek reemployment. OHRM has confirmed that personnel seeking reemployment do not need to take the entrance level exam or complete the oral interview. This resulted in a change to the hiring process and has significantly reduced the time required to bring experienced personnel back to fill critical positions.
  - PSC worked extensively with OHRM to develop the Dispatcher Apprenticeship program to allow Emergency Call Takers to participate in the first two months of the Emergency Dispatcher training process in an Acting Emergency Dispatcher capacity. This allows for Emergency Call Taker personnel to experience the rigors of dispatcher work while retaining the ability to return to the Emergency Call Taker position. This has been very effective and the primary means of filling Emergency Dispatcher vacancies. The implementation of the Apprenticeship Program has been a very successful effort. It has not only allowed PSC to fill a large number of Dispatcher positions, it has improved Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher morale, and improved retention of Emergency Call Taker personnel. Filling the dispatcher vacancies with Emergency Call Takers significantly reduces training time, which means the dispatcher is successfully trained and able to work on his/her own within six months rather than one year. To date, seventeen Emergency Call Takers have successfully completed the Apprenticeship Program and have been promoted to an Emergency Dispatcher. Five are currently in the Apprenticeship Program and are slated to complete the process in March. Three additional employees are scheduled to begin the program in April. A total of five employees did not complete the program either as a result of resigning prior to completion, withdrawing or not successfully meeting training requirements.
  - As a result of cooperative efforts between OHRM and PSC the minimum qualifications to the Public Safety Emergency Dispatcher I/II class of work were revised. In keeping with these changes, on March 10, 2018, a new ED I/II job announcement was released, reflecting changes in the ED I/II minimum qualifications. The new announcement generated an increased number of qualified dispatcher applicants, allowing more applicants to move into the hiring process. As a result of this, the recruiting challenges associated with hiring

Emergency Dispatchers appear to be addressed. Hiring challenges remain in place.

- PSC has worked with OHRM to reduce the probationary period for Emergency Call Taker I personnel. The revised probationary period is better aligned with the training process and will provide salary increases for Emergency Call Taker personnel at the six-month mark rather than the one-year mark. This is being finalized with OHRM and should be implemented soon.
- As a result of cooperative efforts between OHRM and PSC, it was learned that an adequate number of applicants are available for the hiring process. However, time delays in the hiring process result in a loss of many of the most qualified candidates. Over the summer months, OHRM initiated a program to double the number of weekly CritiCall® entrance exam test dates for Emergency Call Taker I/II (ECT) and Emergency Dispatcher I/II (ED) applicants. OHRM PSI also performed the initial screening process immediately after the test. Internal resources performed the oral interviews twice per week. The additional testing, streamlining of the process and additional oral interviews were resoundingly successful, and resulted in a significant increase in the number of new Emergency Call Taker and Emergency Dispatcher employees hired to attend the Public Safety Communications training academy classes. It is important for this effort to be put into place on a permanent basis.
- It must be noted that PSC has recently initiated efforts for PSC Technical Services and Operations staff to assist in the oral interview process. Although this has been helpful and has resulted in additional personnel moving into the hiring process, it is not a resolution to the bottlenecks occurring between the application and background investigation process.
- There is a need to provide CritiCall® entrance exams at times which are convenient to the applicants. This includes offering CritiCall® entrance exams on weekends, after-work hours, and other times when applicants are available. PSC is willing to absorb some of these responsibilities, to reduce the workload on OHRM.
- **It is extremely important that OHS collaborates at least weekly with OHRM to ensure that positions are being approved as quickly as possible for OHS to fill. This entails constant follow-up from our Department to obtain statuses on positions that are processed via SAP, “fast track”, etc., to ensure positions are advertised to fill, obtaining timely registers to review qualified applicants to interview, as well as complete the onboarding process once a candidate has been selected to fill the position.**



**Why does it take so long to fill the Office of Homeland Security vacancies--minus the background check?**

- A concentrated effort is required to move qualified applicants from the application phase through the hiring process, consistent with processes that are in place for other County public safety agencies and 9-1-1 centers throughout the region. Increased efficiencies may be accomplished through additional testing processes consistent with other public safety agency processes and combining other areas of the hiring process.
- Because of the length of time that it takes to get through the hiring process, some of the best applicants have already found other employment or are no longer interested in the positions because of the time it takes to get through the first phases of the hiring process, not just the background process. The most qualified, and most enthused applicants are no longer available as other jurisdictions have brought them into their hiring processes. Most applicants apply to multiple 9-1-1 centers, place the most effort in responding to the higher paying locations, enter the hiring process to the first centers that provide the opportunity, and accept employment to the first that make an offer. The delays in our process mean the loss of the best and brightest.
- **Filling vacancies within OHS range from 3-6 months (Public Safety Communications); and 5-6 months (Office of Emergency Management).**
  - There are numerous reasons why it takes so long for OHS to fill vacant positions. They are:
    1. The external (OMB & OHRM) approval process can take anywhere from thirty days to a month and a half
    2. Once a position has been advertised, it takes almost two months to receive a register and to conduct interviews
    3. If a position must go through the SAP PRB process, this process can also take an additional month, especially since there is no notification to each approver to view and approve the position through this process

**Are you familiar with Administrative Procedure 209? What is your process for hiring Limited Term Grant Funded positions based on the Administrative Procedures 209?**

- Yes, our Department is familiar with Administrative Procedure 209 (Limited Term Grant Funded Positions) which governs the employment of personnel subject to state and federal grant funds.
  - The Office of Homeland Security adheres to Administrative Procedure 209:
    - Under the Authority of 209, OHS follows Personnel Procedure 16-178 (a) *“A limited-term status employee shall mean any employee who is competitively or non-competitively appointed, reassigned, transferred, or competitively or non-competitively promoted to a classified service position...”*